

GRIFFIN PARK, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
520 Callahan Street
Orlando
Orange County
Florida

HABS FL-529-A
FL-529-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
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U.S. Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Griffin Park, Administration Building

HABS No. FL-529-A

Location: 520 Callahan Street, Orlando, Orange County, Florida.

Significance: Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996, the Griffin Park Historic District maintains historical significance in the areas of Community Planning and Development, Politics-Government, Social History and Ethnic Heritage as it exemplifies Post-Depression era attitudes towards segregation and represents low-income housing for the city's black residents. Numerous early twentieth century Frame Vernacular homes were destroyed to accommodate the construction of Griffin Park; therefore, the Griffin Park development symbolized a new direction in the planned growth of the local black community. Architecturally, the Griffin Park Historic District is significant as an example of late-1930s public housing. These Masonry Vernacular buildings represent the architectural style, construction methods, and building materials of the period. In addition, this historic district reflects the design of a team of Orlando's most prominent architects known as the Associated Orlando Architects. This group included local architects such as Arthur Beck, Maurice Kressly, F. Earl DeLoe, Howard M. Reynolds, and Richard Boone Rogers.

Description: The original thirty-one apartment buildings and one administration building in the Griffin Park Historic District were constructed in 1939; however, six buildings were moved in 1959 due to the construction of Interstate 4. The remaining twenty-six buildings in the Griffin Park District reflect the Masonry Vernacular style. The one- and two-story buildings have rectangular exterior plans and have a north and south orientation. The historic design of the complex furnished residents with large areas of green space for pedestrian activities. Amenities included benches, a spray pool, sandboxes, and street parking. Today, the green space between the buildings has been maintained and the original intent is evident, however, many of the amenities including the benches, pool, and sandboxes have been removed.

Located in the southeastern corner of the Griffin Park complex, the administration building is an example of the one-story building type; however, size, layout, and detailing differ from that of the residential one-story buildings. The concrete brick structural system is set on a continuous concrete block foundation. The exterior walls are simply the concrete bricks covered with paint. Fenestration includes metal multi-light casement windows. Shutters decorate the window bays on the front façade of the building. The low-pitched side-gabled roofs are sheathed with asphalt shingles; they were originally covered with flat concrete tiles. A small shed-roofed entry porch supported by concrete columns is situated over the main entrance. Inside, the large and open community room has vaulted ceilings with exposed decorative roofing trusses. Physical modifications to the administration building include the replacement of the roofing material, enclosure of several window openings, and the addition of security bars to some windows.

History: Public housing in Orlando in the mid-1930s was facing many of the same problems other cities throughout the country were facing due to the Depression. Economic times were hard

and many people were out of work, which lead to substandard housing being a pressing issue. Prior to 1937, housing the poor had been a public concern; however, the government was only involved to the point where restrictions were imposed on private builders to provide sufficient light, circulation, and sanitary facilities. Housing advocates believed it was the government's duty to provide housing for the poor because it was unprofitable for the private sector to do so. After much debate, on September 1, 1937, Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act into existence. In response this act, the City Council of Orlando created the Orlando Housing Authority to conduct a survey of the blighted areas of the city. It was found that in the black neighborhoods, a majority of the homes were substandard. In 1939, Congressman Joe Hendricks requested funds for a public housing project in Orlando. The site selected was bound by Murphy Street, Division Avenue, Avondale Avenue, and Carter Street. Seventy-six substandard houses were purchased or condemned and then demolished. A local Orlando company, Langston Construction was awarded the contract to build the "Griffin Park Housing Project," named after Charles Griffin, a former slave who lived in the area. Construction was begun in October of 1939 and was completed the following September.

Sources:

Groover, Amy

1999 Griffin Park Historic District, Holden-Parramore Neighborhood MPS. *National Register of Historic Place Registration Form.*

Bureau of Historic Preservation

1994 Griffin Park Historic District, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.*

Historian: Robert James Taylor Jr., Janus Research, March 2006